

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SINGAP 00950 020352Z  
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 /066 W  
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R 010620Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9747  
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0950

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, SN  
SUBJECT: RELEASE OF DETAINEE RAMAN

REFS: (A) 77 SINGAPORE 0601, (B) 77 SINGAPORE 0663 (C) SINGAPORE 0558

1. SUMMARY: CONTINUING THE TREND TOWARD EASING THE LIMITATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT FEBRUARY 26 RELEASED G. RAMAN, A LEFTIST LAWYER HELD WITHOUT TRIAL UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT SINCE EARLY 1977. THE RELEASE WAS CONDITIONED UPON VARIOUS RESTRICTIONS ON RAMAN'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS. A GOVERNMENT STATEMENT INDICATED THAT THE RELEASE WAS ORDERED BECAUSE THE GOS NO LONGER CONSIDERED HIM A SECURITY THREAT. END SUMMARY.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:

2. G. RAMAN, LEFTIST LAWYER WHO CONFESSED TO BEING A COMMUNIST WHILE DETAINED UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT, WAS CONDITIONALLY RELEASED ON FEBRUARY 26, ONE YEAR AND SIXTEEN DAYS AFTER HIS DETENTION.

3. CONDITIONS OF HIS RELEASE REPORTEDLY INCLUDE:

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SINGAP 00950 020352Z

(1) A \$100,000 BOND; (2) SUSPENSION FOR TWO YEARS FROM HIS LEGAL PRACTICE, AND (3) PROHIBITIONS AGAINST MOVING FROM HIS PRESENT ADDRESS OR LEAVING SINGAPORE WITHOUT PRIOR ISD APPROVAL, ASSOCIATING WITH ORGANIZATIONS SYMPATHETIC TO COMMUNISM OR USED IN PROPAGATING COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY, ASSOCIATING WITH OTHER FORMER ISA DETAINEES OTHER THAN MEMBERS OF THE EX-POLITICAL DETAINEES ASSOCIATION (SEE SINGAPORE A-9 OF NOVEMBER 1, 1967),

ADDRESSING PUBLIC MEETINGS, HOLDING OFFICE, OR PARTICIPATING IN THE ACTIVITIES OF TRADE UNIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, OR CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AND TAKING PART IN ANY POLITICAL ACTIVITY. (ONLY THE POSTING OF BOND APPEARS TO BE A NEW CONDITION FOR RELEASE OF ISA DETAINEES.) MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS STATEMENT SAYS RAMAN WAS RELEASED BECAUSE "THE GOVERNMENT NOW CONSIDERS THAT HE IS NO LONGER A SECURITY THREAT". STATEMENT EXPLAINED THAT REASON FOR HIS ORIGINAL DETENTION WAS "PLOTING WITH LOCAL COMMUNISTS, MARXISTS AND EURO-COMMUNISTS" FOR THE RELEASE OF HARD-CORE COMMUNIST DETAINEES IN ORDER "TO REBUILD THE COMMUNIST UNITED FRONT IN SINGAPORE." RAMAN ALSO ACCUSED OF ENCOURAGING STUDENT AGITATION, STIRRING UP PUBLIC RESENTMENT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, AND HELPING TO "SUBVERT THE GROUND FOR THE COMMUNISTS". RETRACTION OF STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE AGAINST DR. POH SOO KAI (REF B) ALSO MENTIONED.

4. ACCORDING TO STRAITS TIMES INTERVIEWER, RAMAN UPON HIS RELEASE REFUSED TO COMMENT ON HIS DETENTION OR HIS FUTURE PLANS. RAMAN, DESCRIBED AS LOOKING THIN, SAID ONLY THAT HIS IMMEDIATE PLANS WERE TO REST AND SPEND TIME WITH HIS FAMILY. THERE HAS BEEN NO EDITORIAL COMMENT TO DATE ON RAMAN'S RELEASE.

END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. COMMENT: FOLLOWING IN THE WAKE OF THE RELEASE BY THE GOS OF FORMER NANYANG SIANG PAU CHAIRMAN LEE EU SENG (REF C) AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SINGAP 00950 020352Z

ELIMINATION OF SUITABILITY CERTIFICATES FOR ASPIRING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, RAMAN'S RELEASE APPEARS TO REFLECT HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITY ON THE PART OF THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. AN IMPORTANT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO THIS TREND WOULD SEEM TO BE THE INCREASED CONFIDENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP STEMMING FROM CONTINUED INTERNAL STABILITY, THE ABSENCE OF ANY SIGNS OF WEAKENING IN THE BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT ACCORDED THE LEE GOVERNMENT, AND THE REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE THAT IT TURNED IN LAST YEAR--UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION BOTH UNDER FOUR PERCENT, WITH A 7.8 PERCENT GROWTH IN GDP.

7. INCREASED GOS SENSITIVITY TO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBABLY CAN ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO RECENT WORLDWIDE ATTENTION TO THE ISSUE AS A RESULT OF THE USG FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, TO CONTINUED EMPHASIS ON THE ISSUE IN THE PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS OF VISITING U.S. OFFICIALS AND EMBASSY OFFICERS WITH SINGAPOREAN LEADERS. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, HOWEVER, THAT ANY HINT BY A USG SPOKESMAN THAT THE U.S. WOULD LIKE TO CLAIM SOME CREDIT FOR THE LIBERALIZING TREND COULD BE ENOUGH TO TERMINATE IT FORTHWITH.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014